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# SECONDARY EDUCATION ACTION PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

The policy statement, Secondary Education in Alberta, June 1985, is the position of the Government of Alberta regarding the future of secondary education in the province. It provides a framework for structuring and improving the instructional programs of secondary schools.

The new instructional program will consist of a strong **Core** of courses and a challenging set of **Complementary** courses. The **Core** courses, as in the past, will be compulsory. All optional courses will be called **Complementary**; these courses will provide choice for students. Within each course, whether it is **Core** or **Complementary**, the major portion of that course content will be REQUIRED for all students. The ELECTIVE component of each course will provide opportunities for enrichment, reinforcement, innovation or experimentation in schools.

In addition to changes in the curriculum, the Policy Statement provides for significant and innovative approaches for implementing the instructional program. While this ACTION PLAN puts emphasis on the review and development of curriculum and how this will occur, the implementation of these programs in our schools is most important. The initiatives outlined in Section III of this Action Plan are essential to ensuring that the new programs developed as a result of the policy are implemented in an effective and innovative way. The result of both the curriculum changes and the new approaches to delivering the programs envisioned in the policy, will be an excellent education for Alberta's youth.

## I. INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM DEVELOPMENTS

### A. General Initiatives

#### 1. Review of Current Courses

The initial activity will be a thorough review of current courses at the junior and senior high levels. This review, begun in November 1985, is intended to determine the extent to which these courses are consistent with the Policy Statement.

The review of all **Core** courses will be completed by April 1986. At that time, the review of all **Complementary** courses will begin and will be completed by June 1986.

Development or revision of courses will begin with Social Studies. A revised Social Studies program will be ready in May 1987. Implementation is to be phased in, with field testing beginning in September 1987.

In April 1986 a schedule for development, field testing and implementation of the remaining **Core** courses will be announced. A similar schedule for **Complementary** courses will be made public in September 1986.

## 2. Essential Learnings

Certain concepts, skills and attitudes are expected of all high school graduates. These essential learnings are not subject specific but are general in nature. Since their acquisition is intended to help students to function effectively in society, they will be included in all courses leading to a diploma. Work began in September 1985 to identify the essential concepts, skills and attitudes.

## 3. Developmental Growth

The knowledge, skills and attitudes that students are capable of learning change as students grow and mature. The ways in which they learn most effectively may also change. A major thrust of the Policy Statement on Secondary Education is to ensure that courses take account of these changes in students' growth. In August 1985 work was started on developing a framework to assist curriculum developers and classroom teachers by depicting students' growth in cognitive, affective and physical domains.

## 4. Grade Seven as a Transitional Year

Students beginning junior high school must cope with the physical, social and intellectual changes of early adolescence. At the same time, they are expected to be more responsible for independent learning and to acquire time management skills and effective study habits. The content of all Grade 7 courses will be adapted to take into account the changes in the growth

stages of students. The essential learnings will be incorporated into t Grade 7 courses to assist students to prepare for effective participati n in society.

The school staff also has a role to play in recognizing the different maturational levels of students. The staff should vary its expectations accordingly and provide orientation and support to students to ease their transition to secondary school. Accommodating these needs will differ from student to student. A monograph containing ideas to help teachers assist students in Grade 7 will be available in June 1986.

## B. Programs and Courses

### 1. Integrated Occupational Program

This program will assist students who continue to experience difficulty in learning. The program will begin in Grade 8 and lead to a Certificate of Achievement. Some components of the program, including criteria for entry, will be available in March 1987.

### 2. Ethical or Religious Studies

Development has begun on a new **Complementary** program in ethical studies at the junior high level. Components will be available for implementation in September 1987.

In some schools religious studies courses may be used as an alternative to the program in ethical studies. These religious studies courses must reflect the Policy Statement and be approved by the school jurisdiction.

### 3. General Science

A general science course for Grade 10 will be implemented in September 1988. Courses for Grades 11 and 12 will follow.

### 4. Life Skills and Careers

a. Junior High

A revised Health and Personal Life Skills program will be implemented in September 1987.

b. Senior High

A new Career, Personal Finance and Life Management program will be implemented in September 1987.

## C. Instructional Program Requirements

### 1. Junior High School

a. **Core** Courses

In September 1986, a minimum of 650 hours will be required for **Core** courses.

As courses are revised, the REQUIRED component of all **Core** courses will be 80% and the ELECTIVE component will be 20%.

b. **Complementary** Courses

In September 1986, junior high school students will be required to take a minimum of three **Complementary** courses each year.

The REQUIRED component of all **Complementary** courses will be 70% and the ELECTIVE component will be 30%.

### 2. Senior High School

a. **Core** and **Complementary** Courses

The relative proportion of time allotted to **Core** and **Complementary** courses for the General and Advanced High School Diplomas will be announced in March 1988 and will be implemented in September 1988 for students in Grade 10.

b. **Locally Developed Courses**

Locally developed courses which are currently approved are not affected for the 1986/87 school year.

c. Beginning in September 1986, successful completion of both **Core** and **Complementary** courses in Grade 10 and 11 will require a minimum mark of 50%.

Additional information on credit requirements for each course of the General and Advanced High School Diploma will be announced in March 1988. These requirements will apply to students who begin Grade 10 in September 1988.

3. Elective Components of **Core** and **Complementary** Courses

a. Junior High School

Effective September 1, 1986, Group B options will be replaced by the use of ELECTIVE components of **Core** and **Complementary** courses.

Guidelines for the development of the ELECTIVE components will be announced in March 1986. For the school year 1986/87, school developed ELECTIVE components will require local approval.

Beginning in September 1987, provincially developed ELECTIVE components for selected **Core** courses will be available for use in schools. Within the next five years other "sample" ELECTIVE components for **Core** courses will be developed by Alberta Education.

b. Senior High School

Once the review of Senior High Core and Complementary courses has been completed, information will be provided relative to locally developed courses and the use of ELECTIVE components of courses.

**NOTE: All initiatives in the development of ELECTIVE components must be designed to meet the wide range of students' educational needs and abilities.**

4. Heritage Language Programs

A language program may be developed locally and offered as one of the **Complementary** courses when numbers do not warrant development of a program at the provincial level.

**NOTE: All changes and developments originating in the Secondary Education Policy Statement will also be carried out concurrently in the following instructional programs:**

- **French minority language**
- **French immersion**
- **Languages other than English or French**
- **Special Education**

## II. PROCESS FOR DESIGNING THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

To facilitate the implementation of the instructional program, the following structures will be in place by January 1, 1986:

1. The **Implementation Advisory Committee** will provide opportunities for the general public and the educational community to participate in planning the implementation of the new secondary education policy. Membership on this committee will include representatives of the major associations involved in education as well as other interested groups and members of the community.

2. The **Program Coordinating Committees** will translate the policies and guidelines into actual instructional programs for junior and senior high school students. Membership on these committees will include Alberta Education staff, other educators and major associations involved in education.

3. A number of procedures will be used to develop specific courses and instructional programs. Possibilities will include the establishment of Ad Hoc Committees, contracting to organizations or individuals, purchasing of exemplary coursework and other administrative means to involve the public and private sectors in producing quality programs. It should be noted that the practice of making extensive use of many excellent classroom teachers in the development of curriculum will be continued.

## III. IMPLEMENTING THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

In addition to the instructional program developments, a number of implementation initiatives flow from the content of the Policy Statement. Once the major directions have been identified for the instructional program, developmental work will begin in the following areas:

1. Using technology to assist in the delivery of the instructional program.

2. Expanding the "partnership" concept from developing the instructional program into areas such as
   - opportunities for vocational education beyond the school
   - linkages among private and public agencies
   - innovation and experimentation at the local level
   - relevant research
   - use of accomplished community members in the instructional process.

3. Ensuring that all students with special educational needs have access to appropriate programs.

4. Providing opportunities for alternative programs within the comprehensive secondary school.

5. Designing a professional development plan for teachers in consultation with appropriate organizations.

## CONCLUSION

The Policy Statement has the potential to influence profoundly the direction of future instructional programs in Alberta. **Core** courses will enhance students' acquisition of concepts, skills and attitudes for effective participation in society: an appropriate selection of **Complementary** courses will foster the development of unique talents, interests and abilities. For the instructional program to be effective, all partners in the educational endeavor, including professional educators, parents and the students, must be encouraged to participate meaningfully and to assume appropriate responsibilities for learning. If students are to prepare themselves for the challenges of the future, it is essential that they learn to make choices which will provide them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to cope in a rapidly changing world.